

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the drawings were objected to on several grounds. Figure 1 has been amended to show the longitudinal wires 13 running through the belt. No new matter has been added, as the wires were referred to in paragraph 20 of the specification. The drive surface 28 of the vertical portion of the belt is clearly shown in Figure 3, and the sensor opening 23 is clearly shown in at least Figure 5 and amended Figure 3.

Turning now to the objections under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. Regarding the plurality of wires, this feature is described in paragraph 20 of the specification and shown in amended Figure 1. The specification has been amended to provide a reference numeral 13 for the longitudinal wires referred to in paragraph [0020]. No new matter has been added. Regarding the portion of the vertical portion of the T-shaped plate providing a driving surface, this feature is described in paragraph 23. The undersigned points out that claim 16 contained a clerical error, and the word "horizontal" has been changed to "vertical". Applicants respectfully submit that this amendment addresses the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph as well. This amendment was made to correct an obvious clerical error.

Turning now to the rejections over the prior art, the Examiner takes the position that the Gelzer patent, United States patent number 3,737,024, shows every feature in claims 1-2, 7 and 21-23. Applicants traverse this rejection. The Gelzer patent fails to teach every feature recited in claims 1-2, 7 and 21-23. In particular, the Gelzer patent does not disclose a belt assembly that includes T-shaped fixtures fastened to a flexible belt. The Gelzer patent discloses base frames 25, which are flat plates of rectangular configuration (col. 2, lines 64-65) pivotally mounted to a pair of flexible guide tongues to provide T-shaped fixtures 10. The T-shaped fixtures 10 engage a ribbed guide track 14 including belt 12, and the T-shaped members are in sliding contact with the outer surface of the belt 12 having tooth form elements 12a in an intermeshed relationship (see column 3, lines 8-50). The T-shaped fixtures 10 and the guide track run through a guideway 11 or track system, and workpieces are carried on the upper portion of the base frames 25. The fixtures 10 can be inserted or removed from the guideway 11 by vertical displacement. Thus, the fixtures 10 are slidably removable from the surface of the guide track 14, and not fastened to the belt 12. Claim 1 requires the vertical portion of the T-shaped plates to be fastened to the flexible belt. Accordingly, the Gelzer patent fails to

disclose or suggest every feature recited in claims 1-2, 7 and 21-23 and does not anticipate these claims.


Claims 1-2, 5-7, 11-13 and 21-24 were rejected as being obvious over the Gelzer patent in view of the Patin United States patent number 5,339,938 ("the Patin patent"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. The Examiner cites Patin for the teaching of plates 11 fastened to a flexible belt by a fastener. The Patin patent pertains to a handrail conveyor system comprising a plurality of interlocking fixed blocks (not T-shaped plates) bolted or bonded to the flat back side of a belt 10. There is absolutely no teaching of a belt assembly comprising a belt having a longitudinal axis and a plurality of T-shaped plates fastened to the belt so that the belt assembly is configured to support and transport a load suspended from the flexible belt. In addition, the proposed combination of Patin and Gelzer would destroy the intended function of the device disclosed in Gelzer, which is to provide a system in which the fixtures 10 are vertically removable from the guide track 14. If the T-shaped fixtures 10 in Gelzer were fastened to the belt 12 (as the blocks are fastened to the belt in Patin), they would not be removable and insertable into the guide track, as required in the Gelzer patent. Accordingly, the combined teachings of the reference do not render the claims obvious.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. If allowance of this application may be expedited by resolution of simple issues through a telephone conference, the Examiner is welcome to call the undersigned.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Scott S. Servilla

Registration No.: 40,806

LERNER, DAVID, LITTENBERG,

KRUMHOLZ & MENTLIK, LLP

600 South Avenue West

Westfield, New Jersey 07090

(908) 654-5000

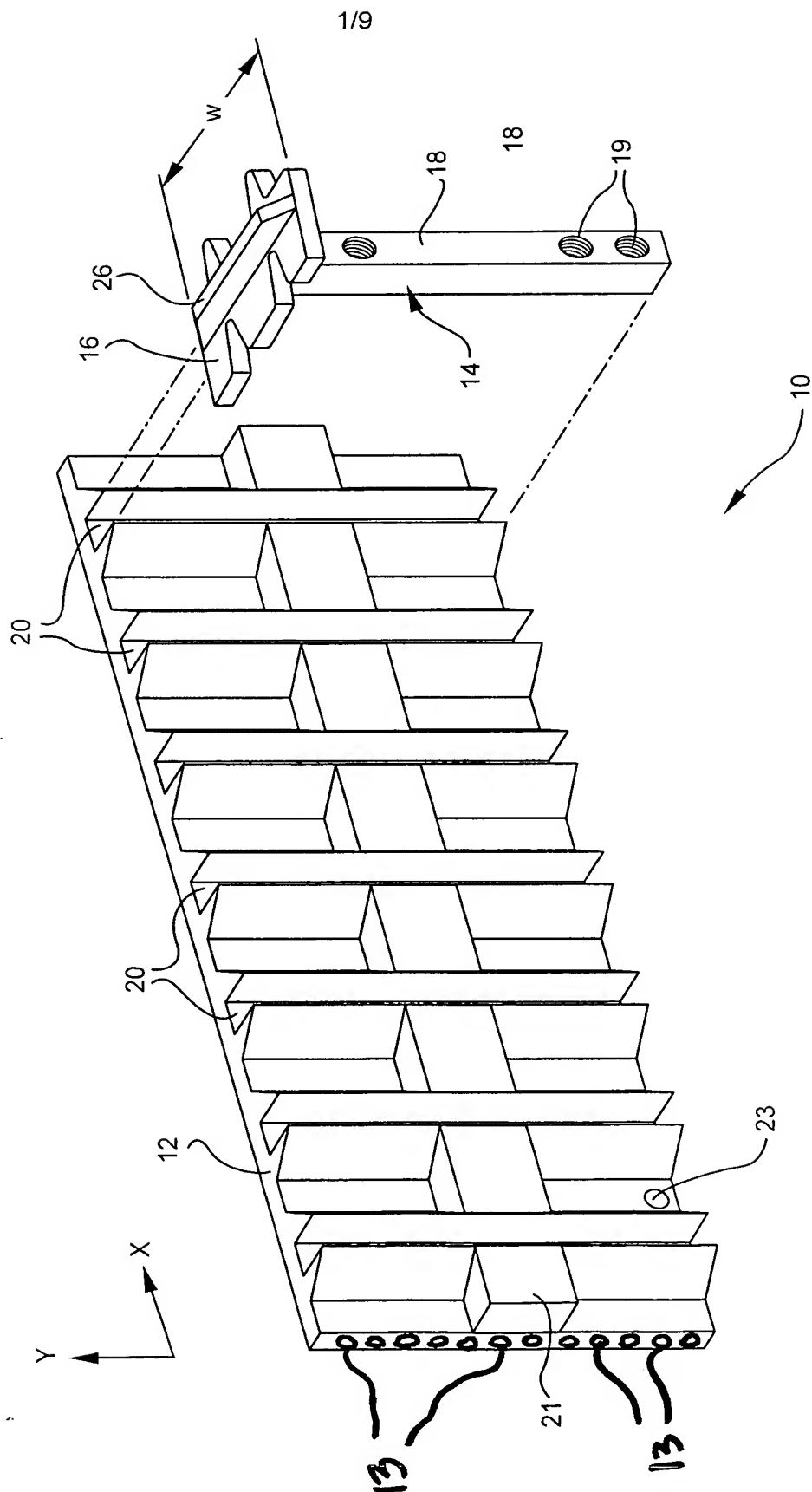
Attorney for Applicants

IN THE DRAWINGS

Please replace the previously filed formal drawings (Figure 1 and Figure 3) with the attached new formal drawings. Two Amended drawing sheets showing changes and two replacement drawing sheets are enclosed.

Attachment: Two Replacement Sheets
 Two Amended Sheets

FIG. 1



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FIG. 3

